

A LETTER

Brevet Från Lillian

Papa, come home!
For we miss you every day!
Come before summer is ended, dear Papa!
Thunder has come,
They are taking in the hay,
Now there are seven small pigs in the sty.
All I would have
Is a coral necklace, please.
For we miss you every day!
Anything else would be much too expensive!
Out in the woods
There are berries everywhere;
Many small birdies are learning to fly.

Now it is warm,
I go bathing every day,
And I jump right in, not a bit afraid –
For I now have learnt to swim!
We have such fun
In our playhouse by the sea,
And a little fir
We have seen out there –
It will be our christmas tree.

All of this note
Almost by myself I wrote,
And I am going to school in the autumn.
Papa, come home –
I have lots to tell you more!
Now ends the letter from your Ellinor.

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

CALLE SCHEVEN'S WALTZ

Calle Schewens Vals

On Roslagen's isle, in a flowery bay,
Where ripples wash in from the sea,
The reeds slowly rock, and the sweet new-mown hay
Is wafting its fragrance to me.
There I sit alone 'mid the trees by the way
And gaze at the sea-birds on high.
They dive to the water with glitter of spray
And feed, while I watch them and sigh.

I'm mixing my coffee quite freely with rum
To a strength and a flavour just right!
The accordion's measures alluringly come
From my cabin so gaily alight.
I feel like a boy, though a granddad am I:
My spirit my grey hair belies.
I only get worse as the years pass me by,
With waltzes and maidens' bright eyes.

Look – there is a gull with a fish he has caught;
But I'm caught by arms soft and white!
My heart is so happy, my years are as naught;
Then play, for I'm dancing to-night!
The sea sends a song, and its fragrance the glade;
To-night you must stay as my guest.
Here dances Calle Scheven with Roslagen's maid –
The sunset is in the Northwest

My flowery isle on your bosom you hold,
You tranquil and darkling blue seas!
While June twilight shadows so tender, unfold
All the slumbering bushes and trees.
You're dancing so quietly, sweet little miss –
I think that all men you despise.
It trembles, that small childish hand that I kiss,
While in minor the waltz softly dies.

But hey, all you fellows who visit my bay
I'm really a sober old man,
When morning has come I must stack up my hay,
And catch all the fish that I can!
The deuce take you, twilight; the morn you disclose
In firtops agleam one by one –
Here dances Calle Scheven with Roslagen's rose
He dances while up comes the sun!

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

COME TO MY ARMS

Kom I Min Famn

Come to my arms and let us dance a waltz together, Rose-Marie!
Soft is the night, you dance so lightly!
Playful you sway as o'er the flow'ry meadow flits the butterfly,
Then like a fawn, wild and shy,
Here in my arms you bend your tender head; and in your gleaming hair
Youth and the springtime are scented there!
While we are dancing we hear beguiling
Sweet music and you are smiling
So lovely and fair!

Windows are wide to the night breezes blowing,
Flower scent over the water is flowing.
Out in the bay is the moon mirrored red where she shines in the
woodland to night.
There in the sails tired breezes are sleeping,
O'er the bay's mirror the music is sweeping.
Sea-gulls are nesting,
Silently resting,
Still in the moon's soft light.

Ah, what is life, my Rose-Marie,
Without the joy of song!
In twilight of summer, in tender romance,
In music seducing that calls us to dance;
In dance, in dance, so light and free.
Oh come and let us wander
Through fragrant glades where yonder gleams
Our land of dreams!

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

ENCOUNTER IN THE MONSOON

Möte I Monsunen

We sighted a ship in the favoring monsoon,
As we steamed our way across the Indian Sea.
A full-rigged ship she was, and her name was Typhoon,
She was sailing to Good Hope upon our lee.

Our captain gave orders, and so our flag we flew,
And the yellow and the blue came up in sight.
In that very moment too, from their gafflenock there blew
Finland's azure cross upon a field of white.

Then as she approached us we stopped the ship's machine,
Just to greet them and get messages for home.
So they luffed and came about, and stood idle in the wind,
While we launched a boat and rowed across the foam.

We caught their ship's ladder and our fourth mate went on board
While we drifted their midships at cable's end,
When I saw upon a spar, in the rigging well up for'd,
Fritjof Andersson, my good old childhood friend.

Sure we met rather often in the trade winds there before, –
The equator is the usual route you see.
But I still was quite astonished, though delighted even more,
When I saw my friend in this locality.

"I was hard up in China, I was robed when in Shanghai,
And by pirates I was held for ransom too,
So I had to wed the daughter of the murderer Foo-Wai",
Fritjof told me, "it is horrid, but it's true!

With the help of this Chinese I went on to Singapore:
Broke and friendless in the marketplace I strayed,
When I saw a-coming toward me Captain Fredrik Adelborg,
Sweden's consul, all dressed up in fine gold braid.

"Well, hello Fritjof Andersson," said Adelborg to me,
"What the devil brings you here to Singapore?"
'Tis from China that I come, but I like to cross the sea
As a sailor back to Gothenburg once more!"

I was clad in shining raiment, I was given money too,
And a passport with a photo and a crest.
Then his wife asked me for tea, and I found that this was true:
Of all ladies she was quite the loveliest!

On a steamboat I worked as an extra hand on deck,
And in Siam some wild animals we got,
Tigers, elephants and lions that were bought by Hagenbeck,
You have seen them down in Hamburg, have you not?

Of all trips I've seen this was really quite the worst,
For a most terrific cyclone we were in,
Then the lion and the elephant from out there cages burst,
Roars and bellows mingled with the ocean's din.

Soon the hatches were broken and the beasts came out so fast
That the captain's bridge went crashing overboard,
Then the elephant snapped the mast, and into the sea he cast
A big bull, my lad – believe me, every word!

The agent from Hagenbeck's the lion ate all up;
The gorilla clambered down to the machine,
Where she aped the engineer with 'astern', 'ahead' and 'stop'
Till I shot her with the skipper's own carbine!

It was Nemesis herself from the jungle, my fine friend!
Soon the elephant and I alone were seen.
When the cyclone left we found a Southwest monsoon again,
And we came to Malabar at Camarin.

But now I'll say goodbye; your forth mate has left the ship"
"But the elephant, what happened to it then?"
"I shall answer all your questions when we meet some other trip,
But we sail and we must set our course again!"

Then her sails filled with wind, and she went her way along,
While to our own ship across the waves rolled we.
As the monsoon blew her on, we could hear their jolly song:
"Rolling home, rolling home across the sea!"

But I counted her sails, and I counted them again,
From the flying jib to mizzen, wind and lee.
And in all were twenty-two clear white sails against the blue,
Disappearing o'er the wide and glittering sea!

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

FRITJOF AND CARMENCITA

Fritjof Och Carmencita

Samborombon, where dwells my sweet inamorata,
Lies not so far from busy Rio de la Plata
On the romantic beaches of the Atlantic,
With the Pampas behind it in a hundred verdant miles;
There I come riding while the April moonlight smiles,
For I wish to dance the tango.

Fiddle, accordion, mandolin
Sound from the tavern and I eagerly step in.
On a bench in a mantilla, with a rose on her breast
Is that adorable little Carmencita!
Mamma is sitting there on guard –
Gladly my cloak and whip and pistol I discard.
Then I bow to Carmencita and she says to me: "Señor,
Vámos á bailar este tango!"

"Carmencita, little girl,
You have got me in a whirl!
I should like to tell your papa and your mamma
That I want to marry you, Carmencita!"
"No, don Fritjof Andersson:
Just forget Samborombon,
If you fancy, Fritjof, any other plans for me
Than to dance the tango!"

"Ah, Carmencita, do not say that you refuse me,
I'll get a job here in the shop if they can use me.
Plodding and slaving, only working and saving,
Never gambling or drinking – just loving all the while!
Oh, Carmencita, how I love you when you smile,
Oh, and how you dance the tango!"

"No, Fritjof, music you may know,
But I'm afraid you'd find a job would be too slow,
And besides I think I heard my papa say, just to-day,
That he knew someone who soon might wed his daughter!
One who has twenty thousand cows,
And an enormous hacienda, he avows,
He has bulls that win first prizes, he has oxen and fine pigs,
Oh, and how he dances the tango!"

"Carmencita, little friend,
You beware of wealthy men!
Happiness is not in cows or pigs or oxen –
It is something you can't buy with his money!
I can make you rich with love –
I shall get the job I told you of!
Then when we are married you'll have small ones of your own,
Who can dance the tango!"

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

FRITJOF IN ARCADIA

Fritiof I Arkadien

On Colla Bella's heights, where goats are bounding
And pine-trees thinly shade the yellow sand,
There is a grassy glade, with palms surrounding
And gently sloping to the vine-clad strand.
There one sees Corsica in clearer weather
And distant provinces in azure rows:
There one can smell the clover and the heather,
And one can wander lightly as a feather
Up in the mountain, without any clothes.

I rambled nude and happy there one morning:
I'd come from Gothenburg across the seas.
A fig-leaf wreath my body was adorning,
And in a box I carried bread and cheese.
It was a lovely day: above me singing
I heard the little nightingale so rare:
Just like a bird set free from prison winging,
I gamboled gaily, back to Nature springing,
For I would lie upon Earth's bosom fair.

The goats and sheep were leaping all around me:
Like little clouds they looked, so white and small.
I felt the nightingale's sweet song surround me –
I was a part of all this pastoral!
But in a while, about my dinner thinking,
Upon the grass I sat to taste my fare:
My wine I opened and I soon was drinking,
But when my head I turned I started blinking –
I saw a naked maiden smiling there!

In all my life I'd seen such beauty never!
She came and stood quite near me on the green,
And then before I got my wits together
Two other lovely maids came on the scene.
They laughed and frolicked there without chemises
And sang: "*Oh, happy days are here again!*"
Then up I sprang, forgetting wine and cheeses!
I tossed my fig-leaf girdle to the breezes!
The maidens ran while I pursued in vain.

But in the evening I was in the city,
And there again I met the lovely three,
And they were clad in dresses white and pretty,
As sweet three graces as a man could see.
But one so boldly took me by the hand then,
And said "I'm leaving on an early train".
We walked beneath the palms along the strand, then:
We talked and drew some pictures in the sand, then,
And sang: "*Oh, happy days are here again!*"

"I come from San Francisco," said the maiden,
"That's why I like to climb about the hills.
I like to frolic without clothing laden,
For I love Nature without fuss or frills.
Yes, in America we're far more clever,
While here in Europe you are more mondaine!
But you and I are much the same, however –
Oh let us wander side by side forever!
Oh, darling, happy days are here again!"

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

HONEYMOON IN BARCELONA

Bröllopsresan Till Barcelona

In Barcelona, strolling I went one day,
Bright shone the sun and I felt so glad and gay.
There by my side Allida, my bride, was walking:
It was our wedding trip – she did all the talking!
Suddenly from my sweet cooing dove I heard,
"Oh, I would like to have a canary-bird!"
So then of course a vend or of hirds we sought,
And a canary-bird in a cage we bought.

"Isn't he terribly sweet?" said my Allida so proudly,
"Little gold winglets so neat; see how they flutter and beat!"
"And he can sing, I repeat!" added the Spaniard so loudly,
Gaily his voice always rings; Like a true Spaniard he sings!"
Allida back to our hotel her priz'd canary brings.

But on his perch the golden canary sat;
Sang not a song, not one single note, at that!
And when we waited hours, till we had jitters,
I said - "Allida, all is not gold that glitters!"
"Wait just a moment", little Allida cried.
"Birdie shall bathe, and then he will sing with pride!"
So in the bath he sat, and when we came back,
Gold was the water, but the canary – black!

"Are you a gentleman, you!" said my Allida so madly.
"That is the war with men! I shall go home again!
Couldn't you tell the truth, when I was cheated so badly?
How could you lie to me so? Is a canary a crow?
Allida freed the bird, and back to Stockholm she did go.

So from my side went my little bride away.
Our wedded bliss was ended too soon, you'd say.
I took a trip to see if I could forget her,
But when I came to Paris I found this letter:
"Guess what I've got – it's something with color true,
It won't wash off, – and he can make noises too!
Hurry on home, you lucky and happy one –
You can't believe how sweet is your little son!"

Evert Taube

English translation: Helen Asbury

THE BALLAD OF GUSTAV BLOM

Balladen Om Gustaf Blom

Upon the Highland Rover, a boat from Aberdeen,
We lay outside San Pedro, and took on gasoline.
I met upon the dock where the Texaco is sold
A man from San Francisco whom my brother knew of old.

'But this is not the matter on which I wish to dwell:
'Tis of the man himself, Gustav Blom that I would tell.
I smuggled him a flask of the fiery Calvados –
He came from Västergötland and was brought up in Borås.

We talk to a policeman – the flask was empty soon,
And so we left San Pedro, and drove to a saloon.
'Twas during prohibition, but Gustav's name was good
In Wilmington, Los Angeles and even Hollywood.

He said: 'Twas in the nineties that to New York I came
As just a common sailor – the Clara was her name.
We hit the North Atlantic and there a snowstorm roared,
The captain, mate and our deck cargo all went overboard.

As oldest in the fo'c'stle I had to take command.
I sailed along by compass, and came to Newfoundland.
But when we made New York, with the law I got in wrong,
So I cleared out and got a berth as bos'n to Geelong.

Now here there was a gold rush, and so I left the brig
To try my luck at Narrowmine and see what I could dig.
I dug and washed so briskly and managed the affair
That when I come to Melbourne, why, I was a millionaire!

I wanted to go sailing – I had to smell the sea;
I bought a fine new schooner so Queensland I could see,
And there I fished for pearls, and 'tis there I spent my gold,
And for a woman's favor I dropped half a million cold!

She came from Fiji Island – I fell into her net,
and soon she had twin boys, who were almost black as jet.
And then she had another – but somehow he was white.
I took this one to San Francisco, since he was so light.

That's were I have my business, a butcher shop, you see.
I wished to have my boy stay and manage it with me.
But he would sleep all day, and carouse till it was light:
His eyes were blue, his hair was fair – his soul was black as night!

So now he sits in Sing-Sing, I'll never see him more,
And I must grieve alone in my gory butcher store.
While my two darky children in Fiji, they behave
And honor their old parents as they plough the South Sea wave.

I dream about the old days – I'm longing there to roam.
They may be almost black, but they have a happy home.
At little strange in color – that isn't anything!
No, rather two good black boys than a white one in Sing-Sing!

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

THE SEA-EAGLE'S WALTZ

Havsörnsvalsens

Fritjof has made a trip to the Swedish skerries, where for a while he watched a sea-eagle. During the evening he has the pleasure of coming in brief touch, in the figures of the dance, with some girls of the middle class. One of these, a Miss Karlsson, Fritjof engages in rather piquant conversation – a flirtation one might call it.

The song, as such, has in its depiction of nature a touch of artistic chromolithography, rather like the pictures of a famous animal painter.

Black in a gold-gleaming sky
An eagle high is soaring,
Gliding on wings moving slow,
Searching the waters below.
Down where the storm-breezes sigh
There a young duck tries to fly,
Beating small wings as the tide-water swings
And the cruel sea-waves wash by.

But in a bay
Not far away,
Sweet music plays:
Let's hurry near,
So we can hear
What Fritjof says!
"Young lady, guess
What sad distress
I saw to-day!
An eagle struck
And took a duck,
Then flew away!"

Down comes the eagle; the duck tries to flee,
Frightened by wings' whirring roar,
Wearied from diving, alone on the sea,
Trying to swim to the shore!
Just as she waddles at last to the ground,
Once more, alas, comes that frightening sound . . .
Tight in the clutch of the sea-eagle's claws
The poor duckling to heaven goes!"

"Oh, is it true, what you say?
Just think of that poor darling,
Held in that horrible grip,
Feeling that beak tear and rip!
Couldn't the duck get away?"
"No, though she tried, I must say!
Clutched by those claws she could never get free –
Caught as you are caught by me."

"Oh, sir, are you
An eagle too,
And I the duck?
It feels as though
It might be so –
That's just my luck!
I think that's why
I feel so shy
And so afraid:
You're such a bad
And naughty man,
My mamma said!"

"If you're afraid I don't think that's the cause –
Though like a duck in alarm
You fly away from me –" "Yes, from your claws!
Ay! You are pinching my arm !"
"Am I? I'm sorry!" – "Oh, that didn't hurt,
But they all say you're a terrible flirt!"
"Do they?" – "They do! But I don't mind your faults –
For you dance such a perfect waltz!"

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

WALTZ OF THE TATTOOER

Tatuerarevalsen

Lady, may I ask if this dance I may claim?
Andersson is my name,
And sailing's my game.
Just in from Bahia –
Sing hey, faderia –
And back home to Sweden today I came.
How de do!
How are you?
What a pleasure to dance with a pretty little girl like you!
I declare
You're so fair
In the summer dress you wear!
What an arm!
Are you warm?
I don't feel any chill in the air to-night to do you harm.
Summer air
Soft and rare –
That new hat is sweet, I swear!

Now I believe that I ought to heave to,
Settle in Sweden, be steady and true!
I used to earn my keep sometimes,
Tattooing men in foreign climes.
Dragons and snakes twined below and above,
Sun moon and stars – also faith, hope and love,
All you could think of on land or on sea –
With electricity.

What a lot of people are dancing to-night!
Music is gay and bright –
It's old, but all right!
Way out in Bahia –
Sing hey, faderia –
There are only negroes who shout and fight.
How de do!
How are you?
What a pleasure to dance with a pretty little girl like you!
I declare
You're so fair
In the summer dress you wear!
What an arm!
Are you warm?

I don't feel any chill in the air to-night to do you harm.
Summer air
Soft and rare –
That new hat is sweet, I swear!

One time in Antwerp I tattooed, I'd say,
Three or four customers every day.
But maybe here that's hard to do,
For I have no one to tattoo!
But if a man had a sweet little dove, –
Sun, moon and stars – also faith, hope and love,
On this one customer he could tattoo –
Then others would soon come too!

Evert Taube
English translation: Helen Asbury

The Butterfly At Haga

Fjärilen På Haga

I'm thinking of a song that I was humming
while waves were strumming
with their sun-spangled spray at our white boat.
The headland lay in flow'r to us was coming
the summer's warmth to where we lay afloat.
This little song, in notes like faint wings beating
told of the butterfly o'er Haga fleeting.

We drifted on the water, clear and flowing;
the oars were sewing
silver eye-lets ere they dove in wavelets cool.
And dreams of eighteenth century were blowing
across my thoughts like ripples on a pool
till I forgave its vain and foolish measure
for Haga's sake and Haga's Rose of Pleasure.

I watched the bubbles dance as they came flying,
and on them lying
as on cushions, tiny water-gods were seen.
But Frida sat and smiled, her needle plying
just looking bright and rosy and serene.
She didn't see the shapes about us washing
like naiads in the lake of Haga plashing.

I saw joyful time, through thought's blue hazing.
The Poet's phrasing
of the "speech of friendly lutes" I could command.
Then Frida asked a question so amazing:
"Was not this poet hard to understand?"
I couldn't speak, not caring to deny
I simply sang of Haga's butterfly.

My feelings I subdued by humming lowly.
The wavelets slowly
rocked our boat and whispered in the summer breeze.
Then came a butterfly, enchanting wholly,
on Frida's cheek he sunned himself at ease.
With this caress, so charming and so fleeting
he brought the Haga butterfly's sweet greeting.

Birger Sjöberg

English translation: Helen Asbury

The Canals On Mars

Om Kanalerna På Mars

On a cloudless eve, while cooling winds refresh us
With a lovely scent I cannot rightly name,
Thoughts about the small canals of Mars enmesh us,
As upon a bench we sit, and I declaim:
"Are we really sure then?" No, I cannot swear it.
But perhaps through reeds all pale and queerly stained
Strange a ship may pass, as strange as waves that bear it,
In a light as pallid as through water strained.

"Do their alders shimmer green in water's mirror?"
No, they are reflected more like burning brands!
(This the Family Journal certainly made clearer)
For the light is red that streams across the sands.
Whether Martian nose, by poignant fragrance greeted,
Sniffs the evening air, the author didn't tell.
But of such a pleasure surely they are cheated,
In that heavy atmosphere, where the Martians dwell.

I know not if summer fields are gay with flowers,
If the verdant spring comes there, as well as here;
If the lamp of Autumn burns its numbered hours;
If a whirling snow cloud brings them winter cheer.
Yes, it seems to me that they must have some pleasure,
Something gay to smile at during dreary days.
Very likely, too, of grief they have their measure,
Weeping o'er small mounds that they, like us, must raise.

"Do they, too, like us, shake hands in friendly greeting?"
Easy to ask questions, harder to reply!
Maybe like the glowworms, cautious Martians meeting,
Wave their small antennae as they're passing by,
While in vain endeavor Science is devising
Ways and means to greet them through the atmosphere.
Let us send our thoughts, a sparkling message rising,
Signaling a tender friendship from down here.

At this very moment, while the wind is blowing
In your bonnet's trimming — just this moment now, —
There may sigh a maid, where Mars' canals are flowing,
Sigh with love like us, such love as we avow.
Maybe in queer tones she calls for one she misses;
Maybe she will get a kiss in evening's dew . . .
"Do you think that theirs are like our earthly kisses?"
Possibly that custom's universal too!

Birger Sjöberg
English translation: Helen Asbury

The Dove Queen

Duvedrottningen

See the attendants in crimson attire
Rush 'round and perspire —
The moment's at hand!
Flourishing hammers they tighten the wire
That glows as a fire
By lantern-light fanned.
Gleaming with jewels, the pallid ringmaster
Stands there uneasy, his whip cracking faster.
Now he calls "Steady!
Everyone ready!"
Quickly the red-clad attendants depart.
"Ready to start!
Ready to start!"

Curtains are parting, and into the ring
Pearl-trimmed Miss Dassy arrives with a spring.
Daintily dropping a curtsy or two
She turns then to chalk her shoe.

Charmingly greeting the spectators' rows,
Hair flying softly, her kisses she throws.
Loudly the tuba now picks up the beat —
The tent throbs with melody sweet.

See how the dainty Miss Dassy is swinging —
The wire is singing —
It sways with her dance.
Puts out a foot — an attendant comes springing,
More chalk he is bringing
To answer her glance.
Frida, the beat of the tuba now ceases.
Look at Miss Dassy — her danger increases!
Carefully sliding,
Forward she's gliding —
As on a sunbeam an angel we'd see.
Robe flowing free!
Robe flowing free!

Suddenly opens a bright golden cage.
Doves fly out languidly over the stage,
Flapping their wings with a whispering beat,
But soon want to find a seat.

Dassy reclines as if on her divan
Resting at ease on the glittering span.
Doves in her hands and a dove in her hair
And one at her bosom so fair.

Down on the ground grooms are anxiously quaking
The platform is shaking —
They screw it up tight.
Loud roll of drums the taut silence is breaking —
My arm Frida's taking
Quite close in her fright.
High in the spotlight Miss Dassy aglow
Waits till the ringmaster signals — "Now — go!"
Doves round her winging
Dassy is springing —
Down to the sawdust she floats through the air!
Wild flying hair!
Wild flying hair!

Curtseying, dancing, she skips on her way —
Catches in passing a whizzing bouquet.
Din at the circus! A storm of applause!
The tent fills with loud hurrahs!

Our High Society claps with the crowd;
Even the Judge almost murmurs aloud.
Then Hasse Bricklan, the wildest of wights,
He bellows: "She's splitting her tights!"

Frida, don't wring your small fingers in sadness;
Don't let all your gladness
Be turned into gloom!
Often good breeding too thinly cloaks badness:
To blame would be madness —
I'm not saying whom!
Let us remember this scene then forever — —
Lovely Miss Dassy, courageous and clever.
Doves fondly wooing
Billing and cooing — — —
Look! In the sawdust a clown does his stunts!
"Look at me once!
Look at me once!"

Tenderly waltzing, the tuba now plays;
Frida sees Doves and their Queen through a haze.
While the mad clowns in the sawdust perform
She watches through teardrops warm.

Red-clad attendants come rushing out fast
Roll up the big flowered carpet at last.
Splendidly turns in the flickering light
The tuba, enormous and bright!

Birger Sjöberg
English translation: Helen Asbury

Frida Cleans House

Frida I Vårstädningen

Something angel-like you may be certain,
Makes a halo round my Frida's head,
When behind the Spring's new flowered curtain
Swift and light I hear her busy tread.
Never crashing with a din dismaying,
Soft she goes as rushes' whispered song.
Yet she does not stand, as is the saying,
On the social ladder's highest rung.

How she makes a thing of grace and beauty
Of a task so worldly, I'm afraid
Science must explain, for that's a duty,
Loving her so much, I must evade.
With her brimming pail she kneels to scour;
Then she dries the prisms round the light.
Dainty as a butterfly or flower,
Gentle as the wavelet gleaming bright.

Winter's padding from the windows tearing,
Breathing on the pane she rubs it clean.
Quick and strong, her little hands unerring,
Find again the copper's hidden sheen.
"Charles XII's Last Journey" next is dusted
To a lively Boston's gay refrain.
Happy should the soldiers be, entrusted
To those hands, where fain they would remain.

While a song the gusty breeze composes
In the wires strung across the roof,
On a chest the china cat reposes,
From the rush and flurry quite aloof.
Now my angel must a hammer borrow
While she nails the sampler on the wall:
"Leave beneath the threshold care and sorrow,
And your hat and cane out in the hall."

Surely now my loving words have taught her
That no bitterness my lot may bear;
Even with the Judge's lovely daughter
Gentle Frida safely can compare.
If, in frock-coat hung with decoration,
He should say "My daughter you may wed,"
I should run where Frida has her station,
Hunting moths in draperies outspread.

Though a worldly wind may stir her curtain,
Worldly dust may gather in her tread,
Still an angel light, you may be certain,
Shines about my Frida's lovely head.
See her like a queen her realm surveying
Though mid steaming buckets she be found.
No, she does not stand, as is the saying,
On the social ladder's highest round.

Birger Sjöberg
English translation: Helen Asbury

The Green-Eyed Monster

Svartsjukans Demon

"What makes you mutter so madly,
And sigh all the while so sadly?"

Oh, nothing for a lady to bother her head about!
She'll find some jollier gentleman to wait on her, no doubt.
More elegant companions, hereafter!

Haha!

My scorn I show to Frida in laughter.

Haha!

If this would make her happy, quite willingly I'd try it —
I'd muddy up the water in our little crystal bay.
'Twill bubble for a moment, then at last be calm and quiet,
While rustling reeds the funeral music whisper as they sway.

No billows mark this lonely grave.

A straw hat floats upon the wave.

When time has passed

Beneath a stone is found at last

A note with message fateful:

"For what has been, I'm grateful!"

"You jest too gloomily, mister!
I'm going to fetch my sister . . . "

Oh no, I am not jesting, I only would tell you this:
A lady finds consolation in the pressure of a kiss.

A gentleman will offer it gladly.

Haha!

My scornful laughter rings rather sadly.

Haha!

And while the crowd is searching and shouting on the morrow,
And frantic boats are churning up the water's surface gray.
A lady — I shall name no names! — may feel the weight of sorrow.
But not for long — a gentleman soon comes along the way.
And while my hand, so white, is caught
In rushes' roots — his hand has brought
A bright bouquet. She holds it, rosy red and gay.
Round me, so slowly sinking,
The little fish are blinking.

"I'll stop my ears with my fingers
As long as your voice still lingers!"

By all means do; but leave just the tiniest space between,
So she may hear the willows sigh as o'er the grave they lean.
No "sweetheart" the engraving is naming:
Haha!
"The Glee Club raised this stone", it's proclaiming!
Haha!

And now the grave is quiet, where foliage is gleaming
And rustling in the autumn wind, when leaves are gold and sere.
The little bird that lingers on has long been fondly dreaming
Of flying to a southern land, where waits a sweetheart dear;
But chirps to me, "I'll stay with thee
A little while. So bitterly
You turn to dust!
To dust, to dust, for love's lost trust . . .
Let earth's sweet sleep relieve thee.
No more may sorrow grieve thee!"

"All this because he sweetly
Helped fasten my cloak more neatly!"

What he has done or may do is not a concern of mine.
Congratulations I offer for her "Musketeer" so fine!
I see the bridal veil float about her.
Haha!
With scornful laughter loud, hear me flout her!
Haha!

Don't cry! . . . If to my Frida 'twould give any pleasure
I'd gladly reach my hand to her to make our peace anew . . .
Her vase of blue with mignonette I'd fill in heaping measure,
And list to "Hearts and Flowers" while we walk in evening dew.
 Forget the scenes of dismal death
 I painted in my jealous wrath!
 Those small pearls hide!
From coffers blue so fast they glide . . .
 And oh, they taste so salt, dear . . .
 'Twas all my foolish fault, dear!

Birger Sjöberg
English translation: Helen Asbury

Little Paree

Lilla Paris

Frida! "Yes?"

Frida! "Ah, yes?"

The town is gay with flags aflutter in the wind's caress.

Wavelets meet,

Criss-cross and beat

On black boats tossing with their lumber cargoes trim and neat.

The city wrapped in mist we see —

A pearl within a rose:

That other Paris it might be,

The one the Judge well knows!

Little Paree,

Little Paree,

You lie there snug and twinkling in the summer breezes free.

Grim and tall

Peers over all

The Poorhouse with the ducks upon the pond within its wall.

Rosy glow

The Bank windows show,

Its awnings wildly flapping as the breezes snatch and blow.

So calm, without the noise and smoke,

Today the Mill is mute;

And quiet verdant bushes cloak

Our Lecture-Institute.

Little Paree,

Little Paree,

You lie there snug and twinkling in the summer breezes free.

Steamboats glide,

Puffing with pride;

The water bubbles in their wake and sprays on either side.

Dressed in white

Two come in sight;

Her parasol is red — the bridge is bathed in golden light.

A pictured Paris it would seem,

So calm it is, and still;

Until we hear, as through a dream,

The Swedish lark's gay trill.

Little Paree,

Little Paree,

You lie there snug and twinkling in the summer breezes free.

Frida, dear!
Frida! "I hear!"
Just think — if all at once the winds of France blew
round us here!
Frida lies, Languidly sighs,
With downy cheek and blood red mouth and evening-colored eyes.
Within the flowery forest gay
My loving chatter rings
So nobly! But I hate to say
My mind's on baser things!
Little Paree,
Little Paree,
You lie there snug and twinkling in the summer breezes free.

Lucky we!
Happy and free!
Our town has not its character, though looking like Paree.
Fair of form,
Secure from storm,
From revolution, tramp of soldiers, frantic crowds a-swarm.
Not here, amid dread torches' glare,
The gory headsman comes
To drag our Judge by hoary hair
At night, while beat the drums!
Little Paree,
Little Paree,
You lie there snug and twinkling in the summer breezes free.

Birger Sjöberg
English translation: Helen Asbury

The Time When First I Saw You

Den Första Gång Jag Såg Dig

The time when first I saw you, it was a summer day,
The morning sun was high in heaven's blue,
And all the meadow flowers, in colors fresh and gay,
Stood round and bowed politely two by two.

So soft the wind was whispering, and down upon the strand, dear,
The rippling wave crept fondly toward the shells along the sand, dear,

The time when first I saw you, it was a summer day,
The first time that I took you by the hand, dear.

The time when first I saw you, bright shone the summer sky,
As dazzling as the swan in white array.

There came from out the woodland a sudden joyful cry,
Where forest fringe was green against the day.

'Twas like a song from Paradise, and there above us winging,
Far, far away and hard to see, the little lark was singing.

The time when first I saw you, bright shone the summer sky,
Its gentle warmth and light about us flinging.

And now whene'er I see you, though winter wind be chill,
When snow lies deep, all glitt'ring white and cold,
I hear the summer breezes, the lark above the hill,
While plashing wavelets murmur as of old.

I think I see the grasses green, and smell the fragrant flowers,
The clover, too, that charmed us, and the summer-scented bowers.

That summer sun is beaming in your bright features still,
And glows for me through winter's longest hours.

Birger Sjöberg

English translation: Helen Asbury

Sailor Jansson

Jungman Jansson

Hey, yeo-ho, sailor Jansson,
Now the morning wind is blowing,
Now last night is past forever,
And the Constancy must go.
If you've kissed your mother's cheek
And mingled tears with Stina's, flowing
— If you've had your swig of brandy,
Then sing hey, yeo-ho!

Hey, yeo-ho, sailor Jansson,
Do you fear your little lady
Will betray you, yes, betray you
For another sailor beau?
Though your heart is beating fast
— As twinkle stars in dawnlight shady,
Turn your nose out to the tempest
And sing hey, yeo-ho!

Hey, yeo-ho, sailor Jansson,
Maybe Fate will have you falling
Not among the lovely ladies,
But where sharks swim to and fro;
And among the ragged coral
Maybe death awaits your calling
— He is hard, but he is honest,
So sing hey, yeo-ho.

Maybe some day you will have
A little farm in Alabama,
While your hair is growing greyer,
And the years are sifting slow.
Maybe you'll forget your Stina
For a girl in Yokohama —
That is careless, but it's human
— So sing hey, yeo-ho!

Dan Andersson

English translation: Helen Asbury

The Haga Butterfly

Fjäriln Vingad Syns På Haga

Through the mist o'er Haga winging
Dimly flits the butterfly,
Then in leafy shelter clinging
On a flower couch he'll lie.

Through the fen new life is stirring,
Wakened by the sun's first ray;
Tiny mites in dance are whirring
In the warming Zephyr's play.

Haga, in your arms enlocking
Lie the grass, the golden lawn,
And the rill, where slowly rocking,
Glides the white and stately swan.
Hear from distant woods the clamor
Of the echoes, faint and fine,
Now from granite-breaking hammer,
Now from axe on birch and pine.

See — Brunnsviken's naiads blowing
On their golden-gleaming horns,
Where cascade of water flowing
Even Solna's tower scorns.
Under vaulted tree-trunks plodding
Steps the steed through cool green aisles
Wheels in dust, and bright plumes nodding
All the world at Haga smiles.

What a pleasure to be seated
Here in this enchanted spot,
Where a man by Beauty greeted
Knows his own a monarch's lot.
Matters not where rest his glances,
Still must well the grateful tear;
He whom Haga's scene entrances
Goes rejoicing forth from here.

Carl Michael Bellman
English translation: Helen Asbury

Black Rudolph

Svarta Rudolf

Oh, see how Black Rudolph is dancing
and bowing his head with a smile!
He's thinking of evenings entrancing
where Amsterdam's pleasures beguile.
Of girls and their garlands he's dreaming
and tawny limbs whirling around,
the shores of Samoa gleaming
while lightly the moon glimmers down.

The swashbuckling fellows are prancing
in Malaga's wine-spattered glade.
The pink-and-white lovely is dancing —
enchanted, deluded, betrayed!
She smiles in the arms of the dancer,
at all that he took and gave.
She sighs, and the wind gives its answer
from Åland's seething wave.

Erik Axel Karlfeldt

English translation: Helen Asbury and Martin S. Allwood

Maiden Maria

Jungfru Maria

She comes across the meadowgrass near Sjugaretown.
She is a little maiden with cheek of petal down,
Yes, like almond-flow'r and rosebud, blooming far from road and town,
From rude and dusty footfall hidden.
Oh, what pathways have you wandered, that the sun has burnt you not?
And what are the dreams, Maria, in your tender heart and thought,
That your blood never burns, by passion bidden?
There glows a wondrous light about your bright uncovered hair
And your brow like yonder moon-bow is shining,
As over Bergsang's hills he moves high and white and fair
And gleams through hawthorn branches entwining.

The evening breezes cooling bring the columbines rest,
And little golden lily bells ring in the sabbath blest.
Soft sounds from colt and kid arise, from paddock, fold and nest,
Faint chirping from the bed of the swallow.
Now the youths and maids of Dalarna are walking two by two.
You are fair beyond the others, the adored of all are you,
Why alone, lost in thought, leave all to follow?
You're like a wond'ring maiden by her first communion stirred
Who in the silent Whitsun night doth waken
With beating heart remembering the words that she has heard,
While of the solemn rites she has partaken.

Turn back, turn back, Maria, now the evening is spent.
You've come too far alone, heed your mother's sad lament.
You're small and you are tender, like a twig of willow bent,
And in the wood roam bears — go not nigher!
Ah, the rose that you are holding is your token and your crest;
It was brought you by an angel from a garden heaven-blest:
You can tread on the serpent and the briar.
There glows a path of moonlight flung across the vast dark sky
To Siljan where the evening red grows dimmer . . .
You e'en could make your bridal way to Paradise on high
Upon that narrow bridge of light ashimmer.

Erik Axel Karlfeldt
English translation: Helen Asbury

Serenade

Tallarnas Barr

Soft on your roof the pine needles fall,
And the whispering birch leaves shower.
Sleep on your straw bed, so sweet and small,
In midnight's shadowy hour.

When winter brings to your window his storm,
When like white-clad wooer he's knocking,
Dream a dream that can hold you warm
While gently your cradle is rocking.

Dream of breezes that playful sigh
Though raging storm be sweeping;
Dream that in birch tree so green and high
Within my arms you're sleeping.

Erik Axel Karlfeldt
English translation: Helen Asbury